CAPTAIN WEBB

THE INTREPID CHAMPION CHANNEL SWIMMER.

ORIGINAL PARTICULARS OF

HIS LIFE,

SUPPLIED BY HIS FRIENDS,

WITH

AN AUTHENTIC

PORTRAIT,

J. RANDALL, F.G.S.,

AUTHOR OF

"The Severn Valley," "Old Sports & Sportsmen,"

LONDON: SMITH & SON.

SHREWSBURY: ADNITT & NAUNTON.

BIRMINGHAM: CORNISH BROTHERS.

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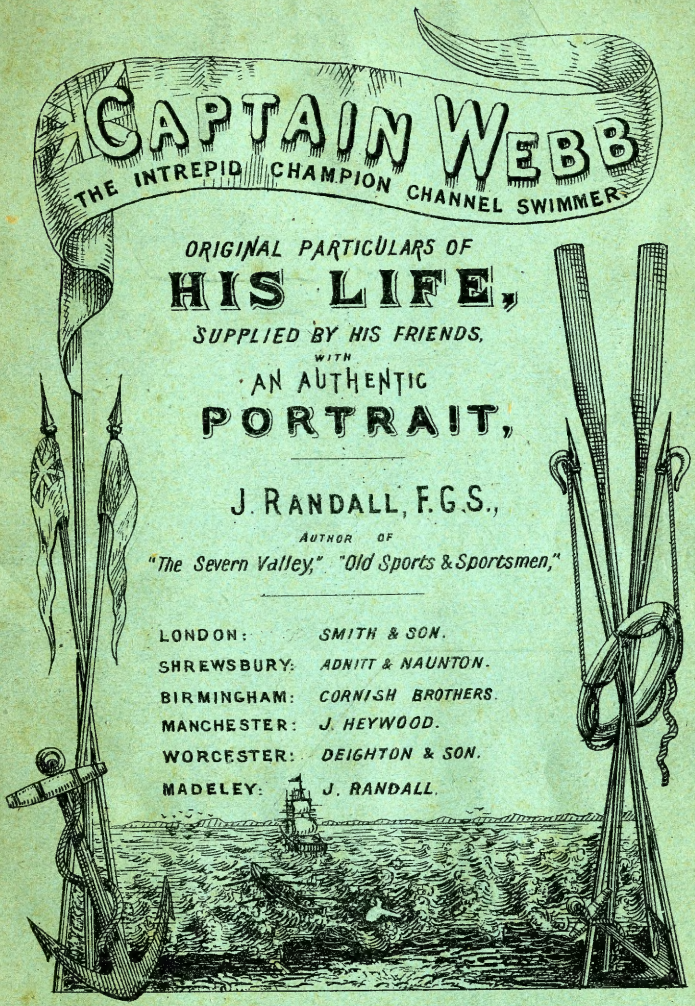

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

EARL OF BRADFORD.

My Lord,

As President of the National Olympian Association; as Lord Lieutenant of the County of which Captain Webb, the subject of this sketch, is a native; and as belonging to a family which from time immemorial has devoted itself to healthy and invigorating out-door exercises, it has been suggested that I might appropriately dedicate this to your lordship, and having obtained your lordship's permission, I have now great pleasure in doing so.

I have the honour to remain,

Your lordship's obedient Servant,

J. Randall.

CAPTAIN WEBB,

THE INTREPID

Champion Channel Swimmer:

A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT,

FROM MATERIALS SUPPLIED BY FRIENDS,

WITH

FAITHFUL PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT.

BY

J. RANDALL, F.G.S.,

Author of "Old Sports and Sportsmen," "The Severn Valley," &c.

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CAPTAIN WEBB,

The Intrepid Champion Channel Swimmer: Original Particulars of his Life.

CHAPTER I.

English Pluck—Salopian Heroes—Benbow, Clive, Hill, and Edwards—The Captain's Paternal Pedigree—Local Circumstances—Paddling in the Severn—Old School-Days—First Life-Saving Feat—Walks the Parapet of Buildwas Bridge—Home.

It has been the custom of late to moralize much on the loss of stamina and old English pluck, consequent, it has been said, upon the changes which have taken place in modes of living. Captain Webb's adventure appears to have come in the nick of time to save us from growing melancholy on this point, and to show us that the human machine is not yet worn out, that Nature in all essential elements is the same, and ready to reproduce her best material as circumstances seem to require. Captain Webb has shown that the same muscular capabilities, the same courage, mind, spirit, and inflexible purpose, are to be found

among us now as when the human race was young and the first nomad leader distinguished himself among his fellows. It seems not to be true therefore that we are gaining in capabilities to produce great vessels and strong engines but deteriorating in regard to the men to work them to the extent deplored. From the banks of our rivers, from the Severn, the Thames, the Avon and the Dart, self-directed men, men with no impulse but that beating in their own stout hearts, have gone out and carried the enterprise and fame of England over the world. With all our failings and infirmities there is force amongst us, which it may be impossible to analyse, but which, like that which elaborates the fruit from the root of a tree, propels us aright. It is a sort of unrest, which disturbs drowsy dreamers around us, and such as many in these dull days cannot without an effort realize. From the very centres of our Midland towns this force and energy is directed towards the sea. From a house on the Severn, with a tree before it, in which he climbed to hang up his keys till he should return, went forth young Benbow, who fought his way sword in hand to distinction, and who, as Admiral, according to traditions in the navy, first introduced the practice of heaving the ship close to the enemy before pouring in a broadside. He was among the bravest of the brave—one who helped to make England the first naval power in the world. His last battle was fought in West India waters, in 1702, when he assailed a French fleet, of force far superior to his own: a battle described historically in the verses of an old song, one of which runs thus:—

"Come all you brave fellows, wherever you've been,
Let us drink to the health of our King and our Queen,
And another good health to the girls that we know,
And a third in remembrance of brave Admiral Benbow."

Young Clive, born between the Severn and the Tern — who at seven years of age gave evidence of such restlessness and constitutional intrepidity as to cause uneasiness to his family—climbs to the top of the lofty steeple of Market Drayton, to the terror of the inhabitants, who caught sight of him quietly seated on a stone spout near the summit Some said that no good would come of him; but one more sagacious than the rest predicted that he would make a figure in the world; and he did, for he gave to England its Indian Empire. "Floreat Salopia" is an old motto which acquires a new meaning when we come to count up the names of those in the county who have at different times and in various ways distinguished themselves. Shropshire has had its heroes on the ocean and in the field: its Benbows, its Clives, and its Hills. It has had, too, its peaceful champions, its pioneers of improvement, who have turned to account the mineral wealth treasured up in its mines in the construction of the first iron ship, the first iron rails, and the first iron bridge; and henceforth it will boast of having given to the world the first man who ever swam the English Channel.

It may seem to matter little where a man is born or bred; there are few men, or women either, however, who do not attach some significance to the spot, and there are few towns where a desire is not shown to share the

merit, if any, of a distinguished citizenship. Wayward as Clive was in his youth, and inflexibly stern as he became in after years, he confessed amid the glory he was reaping in India his yearnings at intervals for his home. We remember standing by the side of that Shropshire worthy, the hero of Moultan, Major Edwards, on Snowdon, when a sudden break in the clouds showed the Wrekin, sixty miles away in the blue distance, and hearing him exclaim—"Often has that little hill, within sight of which I was born, risen before my imagination when under a burning sun in India!" And from expressions Captain Webb has frequently let fall it is clear he has a loving regard for the hills and dales among which he spent his earlier years.

There is more, even, in a man's birth than in the place of his birth, however little some may be inclined to esteem it, and if in speaking of Captain Webb's paternal pedigree we stop short at his grandfather, it is simply because we knew him, and believe that in his constitution and physical development he most resembles him. His mother was kind enough to express to us the same opinion, and in confirmation to show us a drawing of the grandfather made by his son, Matthew Webb, Esq., the captain's father, whilst the old gentleman was deep in his newspaper. The likeness is particularly striking as regards the contour of the face, and especially so as to the firmness expressed by the lower jaw, as we can testify from our own acquaintance with and recollections of him. He was of the true "old English gentleman" type, and a physician of large practice, which ex-

tended "all round the Wrekin," a circle he often made with his familiar pair of greys, over ground where the great Doctor Darwin, uncle, we believe, of the present Charles Darwin, author of the "Derivation of Species," had a previous practice. His name was Matthew, his son's name is Matthew, and it so happens that the captain, who is one of twelve children, eight of whom are boys, inherits the same name. He was born at Dawley, but was removed with his family to Madeley, when he was quite a child, probably about fourteen months old, as his mother lifted him up in her arms in the carriage to look about him. The family then lived in the house previously built and occupied by Dr. Gourley, and afterwards in that where Mr. Shaw now resides. Mr. Webb still has a surgery at Madeley, but finding his practice very much increased at Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge, he removed some few years afterwards to Eastfield House, at the Severn end of Coalbrookdale.

Whether local circumstances or scenery had any influence on the character of young Matthew or not we are not prepared to say; neither do we imagine that our hero was one whit different to other boys of his age, excepting with regard to a more than usual amount of candour, openness, and daring. This much may be said, that young Webb, who like his brothers, was sent to a local school, was of an inquiring turn of mind, and the mother, who doats upon her darling boy, calls to mind many funny instances of this, and of some of those awkward logical conclusions which children sometimes draw to the confusion of their elders; thus, when receiving a maternal lesson that

all we have has been given to us, and that we have nothing we can boast of, the sly young rogue quietly observed that there was only one thing of which he was proud, and waiting to be pressed to say what that one thing was, he replied it was of his parentage.

There are few boys brought up on the banks of the Severn but can swim. They take like ducks to the water, waddling in with their trousers turned up to their knees, as soon as they leave their mothers' apron-strings, as if by a sort of instinct. Fishing for minnows or turning over stones on the fords to find "sticklebacks," "jack-sharps," or "bullnobs" as they are variously called, is another amusement which makes the water attractive. There is a fascination, too, about running water which irresistibly draws boys to it. The home of the Webbs at that time was within a field's breadth of the Severn, as it sweeps past the wooded heights of Benthall Edge.

Like his brothers, Captain Webb was fond of paddling in the Severn, and had learnt to swim by the time he was seven years old. The old adage that "the boy is father to the man" held good in the case of young Webb, for when quite a boy he and his elder brother succeeded in saving from a watery grave the fourth son, whose strength failed him in attempting to cross the Severn. He had already sunk beneath the surface when he was rescued by his two brothers.

Old schoolfellows — girls and boys alike — speak in glowing terms of his unbounded fund of fun, of his mirth-provoking drollery, and of his good nature in sharing fruits or sweets with them when a lad. Some of the neighbours say he was

a "gallous dog." The term is a provincialism, merely signifying venturesomeness. One daring feat is mentioned. Going along the Severn banks to Buildwas, where boys usually go to bathe, he took off his shoes and walked along the top of the bridge, with his hands in his pockets. The bridge is on the Schauffhausen principle; the ribs of the arch, of 130 feet span, rise to the top of the railings; and it was along the narrow iron top of the railing that he walked across the river, his third brother standing by amazed and breathless, not daring to look up lest he should fall and be killed; but the chief actor stood calm and unmoved when they afterwards met. Such early times of daring and doing, times of one's childhood, everybody likes to think about. These days of swimming, boating, birds' nesting, rabbiting, and fishing, and lying on the river's brim, were faery days the captain we believe looks back to as those in which the world was bathed in glorious light. He did not find, as some boys do, school and home lessons a useless bore—an infliction for his sins. No ill-boding fears of being well whipped for loitering on the hill, or wandering on the slopes watching rabbits peeping in and out, or on pasture-flats where the finest mushrooms grew, soured or disturbed him. He inherited a love of reading which all the Webbs possess, and his home was well supplied with juvenile books suited to his taste.

CHAPTER II.

"Peter Parley's Tales of the Sea," "Masterman Ready," and "Old Jack"—Mr. Ward's Father—The Conway Training Ship—The Benbow Regime—Blue Jacket and Blanket Trousers—Sky-Larking—Bright, Healthy, and Well-Nurtured Lads—Home Reunions—Taste for Drawing—Hedge Popping—Trophies of the Captain's Brush—Pets and Paintings.

Among the books in the home library, that god-send to children of a lively turn of mind, "Peter Parley's Tales of the Sea," was one of the number; "Masterman Ready" was another; and often from the serene throne of an early bed had he peopled dream-land with fairy adventures of the imagination drawn from his readings. With these and similar books to supply the material, the brothers would conjure up visions till they fell asleep, with the words drawn out longer and slower in each others ears till the more wakeful finally fell asleep with a prolonged snore. The book, however, which fired the imagination of Matthew, and gave him a taste for the sea, was a prize-book given him by his schoolmaster, Mr. Johnson, of the Brockholes, as a reward upon one occasion. It was a sea tale, by W. H. G. Kingston, called "Old Jack." This book interested him much, and ultimately led him to form a fixed determination, which nothing could shake, to go to sea.

About this time a lady friend offered to use her influence with the First Lord of the Admiralty if he chose to enter the navy; this led to the inquiry whether he would like to go to sea, and finding he was willing, steps were immediately taken to place him in the *Conway* school

ship, on the Mersey. Captain Ward, father of the young man who subsequently rendered Captain Webb so much service, was influential in placing him there, he being on the committee. Thomas Webb, Esq., the elder brother, whose able letter in the *Lancet* most have read, informs us that Mr. Ward was one of the early advocates of this system; that he was very popular among Liverpool seamen, by whom he was scarcely less respected than Mr. Plimsoll himself. He advocated it as a protest against the abuse of patronage, and as the inauguration of a new era in naval education.

This, as is well known, is one of the schools to which youngsters are now appointed, to go through that preliminary instruction necessary to fit them for active service. Under the old *regime*, of the Benbow and even later traditions, naval education, in the modern sense, was unknown, whilst science and literature afloat were alike considered no part of the requirements needed. It is now very different, and before an appointment can be made, even, the young aspirant for naval honours must undergo an examination, and prove to his examiners that he can at least write English, read, parse, and show that he has some knowledge of history, geography, &c. This training-ship system was established in 1857, and it was on this system, on board the *Conway*, that Webb, clad in blue frock and blanket trousers, learnt to reef and furl sails, and to do other work on the mizen, topsail-yard, or monkey-yard, rigged for the purpose. Taking his turn in these and other occupations, which fill up the seven hours and a half of daily work, with instruction

and study intervening, suited the taste of our hero admirably; and in the evening, when a reasonable amount of sky-larking was allowed, and the dizzy heights of the rigging were dotted with climbing-lads, few showed more feats of pluck, or exhibited more coolness, suppleness, and nerve than he. The lads are for the most part bright, healthy, and well-nurtured—many of them scions of families who have made names for themselves in England before to-day; and even if they find the routine irksome at first, the best of them are thankful for it afterwards. Good discipline is maintained, and neither wine nor smoking is allowed.

His home visits, from the *Conway*, on the Mersey, were looked forward to by himself and the family with that degree of delight which usually marks the reunions of those in whom genuine open-hearted affection is found; and these visits were generally marked by some incident leaving an after-impression of prolonged pleasure. All the boys are fond of drawing, a taste they inherit from their father, and two have chosen it as their profession, in connection with mechanics. During one of his visits Matthew, having been out with his gun, hedge popping, bagged a sparrow and a chaffinch, which on entering the house he immediately took to his room and, having tied the two by their legs, made a water-colour drawing of them. On completing it he brought it down and presented it to his mother, saying "Here mother, the nobility have their pictures of game, so we will have one of 'small game.'" From a child he was fond of his pencil. The drawing, which has been framed and glazed, is a

creditable production enough, and warrants the fond mother producing it to her friends as evidence that a love of the fine arts, which all the Webbs inherit, has not been crushed out by more robust pursuits. It has since been sent to the *Graphic*, at the desire of the conductors, for illustration. Nor is this the only trophy of the captain's brush; generally on returning home he seems to have brought some pet, or specimen of his skill. His mother kindly pointed out a drawing on a larger scale of the mongoose or ichneumon, an animal something like our English weazel, but which is domesticated in India, and which, having died at home from too much kindness on the part of his brothers and sisters, he painted from recollection when he came home.

These may be trifling incidents, small in themselves, but they show that in giving rein to his love of more robust pursuits the captain retains a refined taste, an indulgence in which, in connection with a love for reading, serves to occupy his leisure time. It serves to show moreover that a youth who could roll and romp with children, who could rescue a brother or a comrade from a watery grave, and sit down to make a drawing of a pair of homely birds, has about him those elements of manhood which a Ruskin or a Carlyle would approve and applaud as the materials out of which heroes are made.

It may be interesting to mention that this taste for drawing has descended to the family of the Webbs from the captain's great-grandfather, who was a very clever designer, medalist, and button-maker. Among the family heir-looms are several

very admirable specimens of, and designs for, medals, executed by the great-grandfather.

CHAPTER III.

Young Webb's Second Life-Saving Feat—He is Bound Apprentice—Expiration of his Indentures—His Unrecognised Service—Leaves the Rathbones—Makes one Voyage in the "Hengist"—Accepts a Tempting Offer to go to America—Works his Way Back—Glorious Attempt to Save a Comrade—Reward and Medals—Webb's Generous Gift to his Mother.

Captain Webb's second life-saving feat was performed on the Mersey, whilst on board the *Conway*, when he succeeded in rescuing a comrade who had fallen overboard into the river and, together with others in the boat, received a silver pencil-case, as a testimonial of approval.

Having undergone the necessary training on board the *Conway*, Matthew Webb was bound apprentice to Messrs. Rathbone Brothers, of Liverpool, in 1862; and was engaged under that firm in the East India and China trade until his indentures expired in 1866. He then became second officer of the *Castleton*, which was then in the Japan trade. His next ship was the *Brilliant*, in which he sailed in the Brazil trade, and he was subsequently promoted to the *Silver Craig*, of which he was made chief officer.

The captain would sometimes alarm his comrades by his extraordinary freaks in leaping into the water. Putting his feet together, and his hands by his side, he has been known to jump from the yard-arm into the sea. On one occasion he caused a fussy little French officer to swim for it, much against his will. He had shipped from the *Silver Craig* as an inferior officer on board a vessel engaged in the Calcutta trade, plying through the Suez Canal, and in passing the canal the propeller got fouled with a hawser, and they came to a stand-still. A French vessel wanted to pass, an altercation ensued, when a blustering little French officer, not content with easing his mind of a good deal of abuse which, for the benefit of those on board Webb's ship was given in broken English, gave Webb a shove in the direction of the water; and Webb, to whom a dip was not more disagreeable than to a Newfoundland dog, did not attempt to save himself, but plumped down dragging the red-faced and unfortunate officer with him, much to the amusement of both crews. He was of course reprimanded, but putting on one of his comical expressions his superior himself could not suppress a titter.

Webb rendered signal service to the owners of the vessel on this occasion, by diving repeatedly and freeing the screw from the incumbrance. The undertaking occupied over two hours; but strange to say no notice at all was taken by the owners of this invaluable service. Webb felt this, and he left the Rathbones when he was eighteen years of age, and shipped as chief officer on board the *Hengist*. He made but one voyage in her, however, for having had a very tempting offer made him by

some American friends of employment, he went over there, but found it not at all what he had expected. Most of us remember Mark Tapley, the glowing description Dickens gives of a tempting bit of land which had certain water privileges, namely, that of being under it for a good portion of the year. Well, Matthew Webb's offer proved a match for it; but like Mark he was jolly nevertheless. He had gone out as a passenger, but rather than pay his passage back, after his disappointment, he undertook to go before the mast in one of the Cunard liners, the *Russia*.

It was the brave and noble conduct shown by him on board this vessel during the return voyage which brought him prominently before the world, and showed him to possess heroic qualities of the highest order. The subsequent culminating act of his life may have brought him into greater prominence, but nothing could eclipse that noble deed. It will bear repetition. We shall content ourselves with the description given by those careful recorders of events the daily newspapers, which give us records as faithful almost as sun-pictures, of what takes place the world through, and which have given such comprehensive accounts of Webb's achievements as would make it unpardonable egotism in us to attempt to comment upon or improve. What we propose doing, is to gather up the threads, and to weave into one the many enticing and attractive parts of the fabric as they come to hand from various quarters, condensing rather than pruning as we go along, in order to present something like a tangible and permanent record of Webb's unparalleled deeds of daring.

On the 23rd of April, 1873, the *Russia* was running before the wind under steam and canvas. The wind was blowing half a gale, and the men were aloft taking in another reef in the topsails. A seaman at the yard-arm missed his footing, or was blown away, and fell into the sea. Webb was on deck at the time, but he saw him fall, and running aft. with out a moment's thought, and without waiting to divest himself of a single garment, leaped over the taffrail after him into the waves, which were then running "houses high." But his bravery was in vain. The man, who had dropped from the yard was probably stunned, and had sunk like a stone. Webb was nearly sharing the same fate, for the *Russia* was going at the rate of 15 knots an hour, and soon left the brave swimmer far astern. Notwithstanding that admirable discipline on board, which has rendered the Cunard line famous, and which is a distinguished feature of that fine vessel the *Russia*, and the splendid efficiency of the arrangements, the ship could not be brought to before Webb was far out of sight. A lifeboat was lowered, and was soon bounding over the waters towards the place where it was thought he might be. Webb, after having given up the search for the lost man as being hopeless, next followed the steamer, and after a swim for half-an-hour and five minutes in a sea such as no one has ever before encountered successfully, was picked up and taken on board, though not without great difficulty. For this glorious attempt to save the life of a fellow creature he received a present of £100, the united subscriptions of the passengers on board; the medal of the Liverpool Humane

Society, the silver medal of the Royal Humane Society, and the first gold Stanhope medal of the same, the two last being presented to him in the presence of a distinguished company at the Freemasons' Tavern, by H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh.

Here another proof of Webb's generous nature occurred, for on his return home he hastened to gratify his affection for his mother by presenting her with this handsome reward of his heroic conduct. He again went to sea as chief officer of the steamer *Ballina*, of Liverpool, in which vessel he made a voyage to the Faroe Islands in December, 1874. In January, 1875 ,he joined the *Emerald*, of Liverpool, as captain, and commanded her until June, when he came to London. Her passages were short, but Captain Webb got an excellent reputation from his employers for making the fastest passages among the vessels employed on the line.

The captain's own account of his frequent changes is that he liked change, as it gave him an opportunity of gaining experience, and that he always found himself appreciated and in his true position.

Captain Webb we fancy is a hero by instinct, he is evidently one of those who dare to defy mediocrity, and to act out their own higher impulses. He takes a short road too, although one trod from Adam until now, to fame. He does not even stop to reflect that in this sea-girt isle we have had inventors and discoverers, poets and painters, and men who by toiling long have risen to honour. He does not even propose upon reflection that he will strike out a new course for himself;

he simply takes the beaten track and outstrips all that have gone before.

CHAPTER IV.

Running, Rowing and Swimming—Byron, Leander, Johnson, and the Natives of Port-Natal—Webb Inherits a Healthy Constitution—He Trains Himself for his Final Feat—The "Silvery Streak," a Treacherous Trough, Washed by the Tidal Waves of two Seas—Webb's Anatomical Examination before Dr. H. Smith.

Before men had learnt to build swift cutters, fast sailing vessels, and quick steamers, running, rowing, and swimming, were accomplishments undoubtedly of more importance even than now; yet with all the advantages, if any, which men had when the world was younger, and men's muscles counted for more than they do now, Webb enters the list and prepares to eclipse all competitors. With a knowledge of what Byron and Leander had done, and what Johnson had even failed in doing, he sets to work to train himself for his task. Mr. Chambers in *Land and Water* says, speaking of Webb, that

"Last year, when working on a wreck at Port Natal, he was the only man that could take the boats through the surf. The natives were all afraid, so they rigged up a line from the wreck to the shore, and Webb had to guide the boats by swimming with them through the breakers. For this he was paid £1 a-day and all found. He says he never saw a native who could beat an Englishman even at swimming. The water was too rough and shallow for sharks, so he had ample opportunities of trying."

That plunge into the Atlantic, too, and those struggles with its waves, convinced him of his mettle, and proved that he was capable of something beyond what he had yet achieved. Captain Webb inherits a sound healthy constitution from his grandfather through his father, and he has not abused it. The idea of performing some such feat had been running through his mind for some time, and shortly after he left the *Emerald* he went to Dover and took to swimming. He then thought that it would be a possible thing to swim the Channel, and by way of experiment he tried a swim to the Varne light, about seven miles, which he accomplished in $4\frac{3}{4}$ hours ; and from that time his mind was made up to do what he has since achieved. His next feat was to swim from Blackwall to Gravesend, and this gave him greater encouragement for his intended task. On that occasion he only took a little ale during the whole time, and his opinion then was, that if that small amount of nutriment could sustain him in fresh water he would very well be able to swim a longer distance in the sea, when he had better nourishment and a larger quantity, and when the salt water would be less weakening to his sinews and muscles. Knowing that in cold countries it is customary to grease the body in order to retain its heat, knowing also that porpoise oil shuts out water from the pores, and prevents its absorption at the same time that it prevents heat-loss and exhaustion, he commenced training, taking care to eat plenty of fat-making food. The undertaking he very well knew was a serious one ; it would be "horrible torture," as he termed it, towards the last, but he had made up his mind to it. "The

Silvery Streak" may have a poetic or a silvery sound, but it signifies a rough and treacherous trough through which rush tidal currents, which are not only alarming to landsmen but even to some "old salts," for in this 20 miles of water is concentrated the force of the tidal wave of the Atlantic on the one hand, and of the North Sea on the other. The aspect of the water too is liable to sudden changes; it may be calm on one shore while it is blowing nearly a hurricane on the other. The captain therefore acted wisely in waiting for a favourable day. In order to satisfy his friends, who were necessarily extremely anxious lest he should be over-taxing his powers of endurance, he consented to undergo an examination in the presence of Mr. Chambers, who says:—

"By appointment I went with Webb to Sir W. Fergusson, in whose absence from town we were received by Dr. Henry Smith, of King's College Hospital. This eminent anatomist at once kindly undertook a careful examination of him. I have given the dimensions below, and will now treat Webb from a purely training point of view. He weighed, stripped, before starting, 14st. 8lb.; height, 5ft. 8in.; age, 27 years. Girth round chest, tight measurement over nipples, with arms up, 40½in.; round the waist, just touching the lower rib, and three-and-a half inches above the navel, 35½in. This gave a very good relative proportion, showing that his large chest capacity is constant from top to bottom, and that the upper measurement is not due to any abnormal development of muscle—Dr. Smith laid great stress on this—such as is frequently seen in great gymnasts who use the upper muscles of their body so extensively. His chest is deep without the slightest tendency to pigeon-breast. His legs are straight and well set on a substantial pelvis, with a firm but by no means undue development of the gluteus maximus. Some men that have a good deal of weight in the upper part of the body—J. B. Johnstone the swimmer, for instance—fall away very much below. For any work

but gymnastics and fast swimming they are top-hampered, and their legs being set on to a small pelvis lack strength and steadying power from the small attachments at either end to the bones possessed by their individual muscles. Webb, therefore, I should say, would never be a very fast swimmer from the size and weight of his loins and legs, but this weight means in the long run reserve force, as his swim proved. The Sartorius muscles which nip the legs together and tend greatly to produce that long propelling leg action are firm and large. Webb would undoubtedly make a good wrestler, Cumberland fashion, and might prove a heavy hitter with the gloves, but such continued slow action of the arms from swimming during his life would be almost sure to make him slow to lead or return. Round the arm, three inches above elbow, he measures 13½ in., and round the fore-arm 2½ in. below elbow 11¼ in.; owing to the quantity of flesh upon his arms the outlines of tne triceps and deltoid are not clearly defined. Dr. Smith, after applying the stethoscope, described the sounds of the heart as perfectly healthy, and breathing remarkably clear and full in the lungs in front and behind; though Webb once had a slight attack of inflammation of the lungs it has left no trace."

This therefore was satisfactory, and he could go to work with a clear conscience.

CHAPTER V.

Weather Unpropitious for First Attempt—Webb Resolves not to Lose another Chance—Weather and Tide—Old Nepture is Wroth—Cape Grisnez—"Land and Water" Accounts of the Swim—Webb Suffers but Toils on—Pulse on Landing—Webb's Cool Reply to Exorbitant Innkeeper.

Monday was the first day appointed, but the weather was unpropitious. The barometer had fallen, and betokened a storm. Had it not been so the probability is that he would have accomplished the task with more ease,

for in his great disappointment he relaxed in his attention to discipline, and committed an indiscretion unusual to him, so that he scarcely felt in the same condition for his task as he had done on the Monday; but as he was not inclined to throw-away another chance, he resolved to start at midday, and hope for the best. He calculated on being fourteen hours in the water, but Captain Pittock, of the *Castalia* one of the best authorities on the tides of the Channel, fixed twenty-four as the minimum. Webb was ready in the lugger at twelve o'clock; and having well greased himself and put on his swimming drawers he took the water at four minutes to one o'clock p.m., in the presence of a crowd assembled in his honour on the end of the Admirality Pier, Dover, and commenced swimming slowly, doing 24 strokes a minute. The weather and the tide running westward in the direction of Folkstone. In a supplement we give the timed log of the swim from begining to end, believing it will be of permanent interest. In it will be found interesting details, as to the stroke, and number per minute at given times, the direction of the tides, the questions put to, and the answers given by the swimmer, as to condition and capabilities as evening deepens into night, and night again gives place to day. As the swimmer nears the opposite coast, old Nepture grows wroth, as though jealous of the invasion of his domain.

Land is descried at 7.30 a.m., but at 9 it is farther off even, for the wind having increased sweeps round Cape Grisnez point, and bears away from the shore strongly. Still Webb toils on. *Land and Water* account says:—

"10.20.—The excitement was intense; a crowd had gathered on the sands near the pier; the men in the mail boat and lugger cheered till they were hoarse.

10.30.—It now became apparent that Webb would do it; we were within 100 yards of shore; the men on the mail boat struck up "Rule Britannia," and two of them stripped off their clothes to be ready to help directly Webb should touch land.

10.37.—Webb, whose face was incrusted with salt, sounded but failed to touch land, and had some little difficulty in regaining his position. Mr. Ward, Webb's cousin, was taking of his coat and boots, but fortunately there was no occasion for him to plunge in. Webb's face was a strange mixture of red and white, and there was a deep red line across the back of the neck, from having kept his head back so long.

10.41.—A ringing shout. Webb, who feared to sound before, has touched ground in about three feet of water and tries to stand up, but falls heavily forward, in a second the two men from the mail boat are by his side, and each take an arm. They afterwards say he felt like a huge lump of cold tallow, from the grease. They assist him to shore, where an open trap is waiting, and Webb, rolled in a rug, is driven off to the Paris Hotel, Calais.

The men returned to the mail-boat smelling horribly of porpoise grease. But tears of joy were in every eye. Not an eye on board the lugger but what was full. Poor old Toms cried like a child, the tears rolling down his honest weather-beaten countenance. However, we now made for the harbour, and pulled-up alongside of the "Castalia." We climbed up the side, pushed past the man who asked for our ticket, jumped into a carriage and got first to the telegraph-office, and the news was known in London almost before some of the men had left the lugger."

J. G. Chambers, in *Land and Water*, August 28th, says:—

"Webb's pulse immediately on landing after his swim was 72, temperature, 98; when in bed at Calais, three hours after, it had risen to 101; and he felt hot and feverish on awakening out of his first nap, and he was in no frame of mind to be interviewed by all the curious,

male and female, of Calais for the benefit of the landlord. This worthy had also engaged the local band to play in the courtyard to "hush him to slumbers," as the Boniface remarked; it had, however, a contrary effect, and kept him awake. The scene with the landlord on leaving must have been amusing. That intelligent individual sent in his little account, and inserted fifty francs for medical attendance, which consisted in a local physician feeling Webb's pulse and performing one other momentous operation by looking at his tongue, unasked. Webb, with remarkable savoir faire, drew the modest landlord's attention to the condition in which he had arrived in Calais, puris naturibus, and the apparent improbability of his having burdened himself with a portemonnaie for such a journey; but inasmuch as he was so pleased with his recent swim, he would take care to bring the amount for the doctor with him the next time he swam over, and would also present him with his portrait."

CHAPTER VI.

Webb's Friends who Rendered him Service—Dodd's Estimate that Webb Swam from 50 to 60 Miles Through Four Tides—Captain Webb's Reception at Dover—His Reception at Mess with the 24th Regiment—His Reception by the Cinque Ports Yacht Club—The Mayor's Congratulatory Address—The Captain's Reply—Affecting Speech by Admiral Hawthorn.

It is but fitting that those who rendered signal service to Captain Webb should receive a word of recognition. Mr. G. H. Ward, his cousin, though not exactly fulfilling the office of a trainer, was nevertheless a most judicious adviser and friend, and upon both the first and the second voyages he never left his place in the small boat which accompanied the swimmer. On the second

occasion he sat in the stern sheets of the boat for twenty-one hours and three-quarters continually watching his cousin, handing him refreshments whenever he required them, and holding the lantern during the night watches to light the swimmer on his way. The assistance of Mr. George Toms, who piloted the captain on both occasions, was simply invaluable. He has been at sea off and about the coast since 1837, and probably is better versed in the nature of the Channel than any pilot in Dover, with the exception of the veteran Dodds, who accompanied the lugger on Wednesday. He is of opinion that the total amount of distance covered by Captain Webb, counting the drift way he made, was between fifty and sixty miles, as he had to swim through four tides, of which he got two whole ones, and a portion each of the remaining two.

Captain Webb left Calais for Dover, on Thursday, by the *Castalia*, and it is a question, it has been said, whether any monarch was ever received at the Admirality Pier with the same enthusiasm that was displayed by the great crowds of spectators as the gallant captain stepped ashore. It was generally known that he would arrive by one of the Calais afternoon boats, and before three o'clock the promenade of the pier, extending half-a-mile seawards, was closely packed. Shortly after three o'clock the *Castalia* was sighted, gaily decked with a profusion of flags, and the crowd making sure that the display of bunting was in honour of the wonderful swimmer, raised a loud cheer as the ship drew up to her moorings. Captain Webb remained below until the passengers were landed, but his whereabouts

in the saloon was soon discovered, and the crowd around him becoming enthusiastically uncomfortable, he went on deck, where he was at once recognised, and a ringing cheer ran up the length of the pier. As he landed the people rushed upon him, competing hotly for the possession of his hand. He was in excellent humour, and did his best to accommodate all. Some who failed to grasp his hand expended their enthusiasm in patting his back. As he marched up the pier there was a prolonged ovation, hats waving, handkerchiefs fluttering, and continued hurrahs. Here Captain Webb got into his carriage, which was in waiting, and drove to his hotel. Two men belonging to the lugger which accompanied the swim, insisted on standing up on each side of him in the carriage, bearing flags,

At the mess of the 24th Regiment, on Thursday night, Captain Webb was the guest of the officers, and his health followed that of the Queen. It was celebrated with "24th honours," which seems to be the same as Highland honours, only in a modified form—that is to say, with one foot on the chair and the other on the table, but not with the subsequent breaking of glasses. Captain Webb, replied, thanking the officers of the corps for the kind reception they had given him, and when the dinner party had broken up the captain was hoisted shoulder high, and carried in triumph round the room. The mess also presented him with a very handsome silver Burmese cup.

On Friday Captain Webb was received at the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, where he met with a most enthusiastic reception from a large assembly of ladies and gentlemen. The Mayor of

Dover occupied the chair, and in the name of the people of Dover, whose feelings he was sure would represent those of the whole English nation, heartily congratulated him upon his having accomplished the greatest feat in swimming which the world had ever known. In the course of his remarks he said:—We have all of us heard in times past of extraordinary accounts of swimming under different circumstances. We have heard of the celebrated poet and writer swimming the Hellespont. I don't know whether he did it for love or money, but I believe it was for love. (Laughter.) We have heard of extraordinary swimming, but in this world there never was such a marvellous exploit as that one which has just been completed by Captain Webb; and I make bold to say that I don't believe that in the future history of the world any such feat will be performed by anybody else. (Cries of "Never, never.") I can say I believe that I am speaking not only the sentiments of the ladies and gentlemen in this room, but also the sentiments of the English people generally. (Great cheers.) This will be re-echoed from one end of England to the other. The nation will be proud that an Englishman has succeeded in doing what was never done before, and probably will never be done again. (Cheers.) The Mayor concluded by proposing the health of Captain Webb, which was drunk amidst long-continued cheering and clapping of hands.

Captain Webb, in responding, said—Mr. Mayor, ladies and gentlemen,—I beg to thank you kindly for the cordial reception you have given me here to-day, and to assure you that I hope I have

deserved it in one way, for I did my swim in a fair and honest English fashion. (Cheers.) I had a very hard task at the last; the sea was very rough, and I was nearly blinded by the spray. But I am glad to say I was able to finish by walking ashore on Calais sands. (Cheers.) I beg to thank you for the reception you have given me to-day. (Cheers.)

Admiral Hawthorn who was called upon to speak on behalf of the club, the Commodore being absent, said—On such an occasion as this I should think nobody in England would hesitate to do honour to this great man now amongst us. I am an old sailor, tottering on the grave, and it is the greatest gratification to me to contemplate before I die that I have the proud satisfaction to see this brave, noble, and plucky man standing before her Majesty and the inhabitants of this country to receive that token of approbation that his services demand. (Cheers.)

The captain left Dover on Saturday morning, escorted by the band of the Dover company of Fifth East Kent Rifle volunteers, playing "See the Conquering Hero Comes" to the station, where he was lustily cheered on his arrival and departure.

CHAPTER VII.

Captain Webb is Besieged at Wellington Station and Drawn in Triumph through the Streets—Grand Reception and Torchlight Procession at Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge—Captain Webb at Church—Visits and Addresses at Dawley and Madeley—Returns to London—Meeting at Ironbridge, Lord Forester in the Chair, &c.

The career of the captain from the time the report reached home of his brave conduct on board the *Russia*, was watched with no little interest by his Salopian friends, and great as that interest was, it grew as it become known that he purposed swimming the Channel, and of course deepened in intensity as the newspapers reported the attempt being made, and increased beyond all bounds when his success was finally known. Bells were rung, cannons were fired, and shouts and huzzas rent the air.

Enthusiasm rose to a climax when on Friday a telegram from Dover announced that the gallant captain would come home next day, Saturday; and steps were at once taken to give him a hearty reception. The news having crept out that he would come through Wellington, the townspeople turned out to share in the reception.

The approaches to the station were crammed to suffocation, ladies crowded the balconies with boquets, ribbons, bannerets, pocket-handkerchiefs, and smiled a welcome, whilst men raised a shout which the Wrekin, and Ercall too, echoed back. The band of the 7th Shropshire Rifles, under Captain Patchett, was present, and headed, as well as it could, the procession, but the crowd was so great that it occupied half an hour for the

captain to reach the carriage which his Ironbridge friends had prepared for him. The crowd insisted in taking the horses from the carriage, which caused delay, so that nearly two hours expired before the procession reached Coalbrookdale, where the main body, headed by the 6th Shropshire Rifle Corps band waited, and where a handsome triumphal arch was erected.

The scene here at the moment of the captain's arrival was impressive. Houses were illuminated, Chinese lanterns glimmered among the evergreens, bonfires blazed, and hundreds of torches raised on high and carried in the hand illuminated the valley, whilst fog signals, cannon, bells, and band added to the sounds which everywhere went up from crowds congregated in the valley.

An address expressive of the feelings of the inhabitants was read by George Burd, Esq., and responded to by the captain; after which the closely-packed mass moved slowly down Coalbrookdale, along the Wharfage, and through the town of Ironbridge, where, in addition to house illuminations, flags, banners, and other decorations, gas stars, jets in varied and beautiful designs, were to be seen. The *Borough of Wenlock Express* says :—

"Never did the bosom of Sabrina, reflect a sight so glorious. The spectacle viewed from the Benthall side of the river was magnificent—a continuous stream of torchlights extending through the town to Orchard House, the father's home. This reached, deafening cheers resounded again and again, which were repeated as the band struck up "Home, sweet home."

The meeting of mother and son and other members of the family may be better imagined than described, suffice it to say that with neigh-

bours and friends the feeling was one and unanimous, and the theme everywhere was one of congratulation.

"The Webbs," said one, "are such a meek family." "No show or haughtiness about them;" "They are so united and affectionate, too;" "I would rather the honour came to them than any family I know;" were remarks heard from others.

Sunday morning came, with its sabbath stillness and welcome quiet. But many an eye went direct to the seat of the Webb family, at church, at Coalbrookdale, as the Rev. Mr. Steward read out for his text, the 1 Corinthians ix—"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain."

Many lingered, too, outside, and many a hand was held out to be shaken as Captain Webb passed along to pay a visit to his aged grandmother.

The quiet the gallant captain sought at Orchard House was broken in upon on Monday. The inhabitants of Dawley, where Captain Webb first drew breath, put in a claim for a visit, in order to afford them the opportunity of presenting an address of congratulation. This was not to be resisted, and all the shops were closed at Ironbridge at noon, a carriage and four was again placed at the disposal of the captain, his mother, sister, and Mr. Ward, and these, accompanied by tradesmen and others on horseback and in carriages, proceeded to Dawley, where they were received with very many emblems of rejoicing, and where cheers again and again repeated were most hearty. A cloud of handkerchiefs waved from the windows, and a shower of boquets descended

around the captain, who bowed his acknowledgements. A wholesale hand-shaking was undertaken, and Mr. Noah Wilks read a highly congratulatory and kind address.

Equally cordial and enthusiastic was the reception given to the captain at Madeley, as he passed through to Ironbridge, flags, banners, bannerets, and a profusion of mottoes—"Welcome to Captain Webb," "Welcome England's Hero," "Honour to the Brave," "Welcome," &c., &c., in various forms and devices, decorated walls and windows in front of the shops; cannon were fired, the church bells rang merry peals, and the band played patriotic and suitable airs. A beautifully illuminated address was read by Captain Anstice, of the Sixth Shropshire R.V., and after Captain Webb had replied, hearty cheers were given for Mrs. Webb and family, Mr. Ward, Mr. Pearce, Captain Anstice, and others. The captain's health was drunk in champagne, and the party soon afterwards drove to Ironbridge.

On Tuesday the captain took his leave of Ironbridge, *en route* for London, headed by band and flags, amid the warm congratulations of his relatives and friends, the firing of cannon, and the ringing of bells.

A meeting previously called by the Mayor of the borough of Wenlock, in which Doctor Webb, Captain Webb's father, resides, was held after his departure at the Tontine Hotel, at which Lord Forester presided, and at which speeches containing warm and highly eulogistic expressions were delivered, accompanied by resolutions unanimously agreed to that subscriptions be at once raised for the purpose of presenting the high

spirited and noble captain with a substantial acknowledgement of the pride and satisfaction which the county feels towards him as a Shropshire man, for having accomplished a feat unexampled and unapproached in the history of the world. The mayor, (E. Roden, Esq.) Lord Forester, W. R. Anstice, and Mrs. Anstice subscribed £25 each; J. A. Anstice, R. E. Anstice, the Rev. William Jones, G. and A. Maw, Esqrs., subscribed £10 each, and other old neighbours £5 and some smaller sums. W. P. Brookes, Esq., the originator of the Wenlock Olympian Society, and the promoter of similar societies in Manchester, and other towns in the kingdom, attended, and expressed a hope that the captain's triumph may give an impetus to physical education the country through.

All advocates of athletic exercises and physical education will, we imagine, indorse the earnest aspirations of Doctor Brookes, and earnestly strive for the accomplishment of that end. There is no reason why swimming classes should not become as general as boating or cricket clubs. We have clubs and classes ethical and religious, societies æsthetical, political, social, and humane, so multifarious that it would be impossible to name them; still there is room for one other, one which, whilst it would encourage the development of the muscles, would at the same time promote what all value, and what many profess to aim at—health, which is dependent on organic laws, temperance, and a degree of cleanliness which would approach near to godliness. Cleanliness and exercise are the very angels of health, which in itself is nothing more than the wholesomeness of life.

It is most important to bear in mind that not only modern modes of living but mechanical appliances tend, the one to weaken, and the other to supplant muscular force, and that it is needful for the healthful maintenence of the body to subject it to discipline, of which swimming among other exercises should form part.

Could Captain Webb have achieved unparalleled pre-eminence by the performance of an athletic feat like this, or have kept up self-reliant human energy for so long a time without that Herculean breadth of chest, which he came by in consequence of development? Captain Webb is a Hercules himself in his own family, simply because of the difference in his mode of life; and it will be well alike for individuals and for the nation if his example is extensively followed. The writer in *Land and Water*, previously quoted, observes:—

"All talent is hereditary; the aptitudes of the father are redeveloped in the son; hence the more that is done by Captain Webb and his like to encourage swimming the more will the same art be cultivated by our descendants. The example is everything; by such means only, by the performance of exceptional feats, can a general knowledge of swimming be made easy and familiar among all classes. One of our contemporaries has made the remark that this age is too luxurious to admit of real athletic excellence in any branch. This is a wholly erroneous view—luxury may injure morals, but it need not lead to muscular degeneration. Certainly as to swimming this is better understood by the wealthy, luxurious classes than it is by the poor; but generally, however luxurious the age, the love of fame still survives, and the desire for money is rather increased than diminished, and money can only be made, in any department, by very superior pre-eminence. We live better and under healthier conditions than our grandfathers did, hence our bodies are in finer condition; and, what is more important still, as

we advance in knowledge we get to understand better the elements requisite to ensure success. Our power over nature thus becomes more complete when we try we can accomplish more. An age which can boast of the pluck and skilled perseverance of such a man as Webb, and which can point to the endurance and enterprise of a Livingstone, need fear no comparison physically with any bygone generation."

Already Captain Webb's exploit is bearing fruit. At a meeting in the Assembly Room Gravesend, presided over by the Mayor, on the 14th September, the largest, his worship observed, he had seen there since he had been Mayor, and which was held for the purpose of presenting a purse of £75, subscribed for by 200 Gravesend pilots, it was stated that the captain's great feat would be attended with the practical result of causing the Gravesend people to erect a floating swimming bath. Captain Webb in returning thanks said he hoped sincerely that what he had done might lead throughout the country to an increased effort to learn to swim, and that the day would soon come when swimming would be considered an essential part of every boy's education.

We think that it will. The enthusiasm with which the gallant captain has been received in London, and that with which he is now greeted in Liverpool, as these pages pass through the press, is at least an indication of the importance the public attach to the subject. The space we have left will permit of a summary only of the greetings Captain Webb received after returning from Ironbridge. At the Baltic Club, he was greeted with cheers which the newspapers describe as uproarous, and a presentation of a purse of £120, which had been subscribed for him, was made. He was

next taken to the City Carlton Club; but the most exciting scene was at the Stock Exchange, where his arrival was the signal for an indescribable scene of intense excitement. He had been expected on the previous day, but the crowds at the entrance to the house rendered his approach a more difficult feat to him than swimming from Dover to Calais, and, therefore, the visit was adjourned. He also visited Mr. Chinnery's office in Copthall-court, and that fact becoming known, a large crowd assembled in Throgmorton street, who lustily cheered the gallant sailor on his way to the Stock Exchange. Here he was borne, amid a seething mass of people, to the centre of the building, where he was surrounded by a throng of about 1,500 persons, many cheering and waving their hats. A break in the applause enabled him to make a short speech, thanking them for his reception. A verse of "See the conquering hero comes" was then sung, and the captain was escorted, amid the most tremendous acclamations, to the Capel court entrance, where, with difficulty, he entered a cab, and drove off amid loud cheering. On his return to Dover, an eye-witness says—the occasion was taken advantage of by the town to give the gallant swimmer another enthusiastic reception, which was perhaps of a more demonstrative character than that accorded to him on his arrival from Calais the day following the successful accomplishment of his great task. Captain Toms and the crew of the lugger *Ann* were there with flags and banners, and outside the station was the band of the local rifle volunteers, waiting to play the captain up to his hotel. Unaccompanied by any one, Captain Webb stepped on to the platform, looking

rather astonished at the scene before him, but preserving the same quiet, modest demeanour, and the same gentlemanly bearing, which he exhibited from the first, and which have won for him the highest esteem and regard. Hardly had he time to look round before he was pounced upon and hemmed in, while cheer upon cheer rose, and hats and handkerchiefs were waved overhead. Again and again he lifted his hat and bowed in the best manner he could under the difficult position in which he was placed. On the Monday following, he dined with the officer of the Royal Artillery at the castle, and afterwards met the working men of Dover, at the Royal Oak Assembly Rooms, to receive their testimonial, consisting of a purse of money and an address. Down to the time of going to press, indeed, the gallant captain has met with a succession of ovations, everywhere accompanied by substantial recognitions of merit.

[ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.]

APPENDIX.

CAPTAIN WEBB.

(From the Hornet.)

Write Matthew Webb's brave name on the scroll of England's glory;
Grave his gallant, wondrous deed on the roll of English story;
Tell how through that famous night, he the billows boldly breasted—
How sturdily he "still kept on," and hasted not, nor rested!

His brawny arms the long waves cleave—immortal Fame inspires him;
The waters cannot chill the glow of ruddy Hope that fires him!
The mocking waves they rise and roar, and lash the waves around him,
The Channel waters, braved thus, all angrily surround him!

His grand strength fails—a moment, fails—his brave heart back it bringeth,
And from his manly, English lips the English 'All right!' ringeth.
Slow comes the dawn but shows no land, no Gallic shoreland near him!
But hope and courage both abound, they brace—his comrades cheer him.

'Land, ho! Land, ho!' and through the mist, all England with him sees it!
He'll win it yet, that glorious goal! His English pluck decrees it!
And England's heart beats, pulse by pulse, with his, as seas break o'er him;
All England's wishes in his wake, the lofty prize before him.

* * * * *

He weaker grows! He falters—fails! One half-mile more for glory!
He lands! That footfall thrills the world!—the world shall tell the story!

* * * * *

A human link to-day unites fair France and England olden;
Webb's name on both grand flags emblaz'd, in letters pure and golden!
Britannia glories in her son! He greater glory giveth!
And Matthew Webb's brave name shall live as long as England liveth!

WEBB ACROSS THE WATER.

(From Punch.)

Come, now at last there's something new we've seen beneath the Sun;
A swim from England's shore to France, which Captain Webb has done.
So kudos be to Captain Webb—and he'll get it from the Queen,
As an ornament to his Country and the Mercantile Marine.

He stripped himself to his caleçons—of merino made, or flannel?
He anointed his skin with porpoise-oil, and plunged into the Channel.
And, whilst bystanders let their tongues in cheers uproarious loose,
Some fools cried, "What a duck of a man!" and others, "What a goose!"

Hurrah for daring Captain Webb, that resolute Commander!
He has far outdone Lord Byron, Mr. Ekenhead, and Leander.
As for Leander, now his fame must sink to nearly zero;
For what is he compared with Webb—who's in himself a Hero?

Leander was a Grecian youth, but Captain Webb's a Briton.
Our Webb is to Leander as a large cat to a kitten;
Or rather, since above all things a cat objects to water,
Leander is a water-rat to Webb, who is an otter.

Our Merchant Navy's mostly manned by men of this man's stuff;
A man of might and valour, and endurance firm and tough.
When shipnackers, O Plimsoll, send seaworthy men like him
Afloat in unseaworthy ships, they need know how to swim!

Now, Jonathan, let Webb's exploit drive none of you too frantic,
So as to lead to more than talk of swimming the Atlantic.
You may cross it in a fragile barque—not to choose an A 1 clipper—
But O, don't perish in the attempt to excel our doughty Skipper.

Timed Log of the Journey.

The following timed log will enable the reader to realise more fully the greatness of Captain Webb's undertaking :—

12.56 p.m.—Captain Webb leaves the lugger in the bay, rows up to the end of the Pier, and dived into the water; cheered by a crowd that had assembled on the Pier, and followed by a convoy of small boats. Weather: wind east, water smooth, sky overcast.

1.10 p.m.—About a mile south of Admiralty Pier. Course of swimmer S.E. by S.

1.30.—Abreast Shakespeare Cliff: Webb still making his course direct across, but the current carrying him S.E. by S. The tide begins to turn, and in the slack water his course is now directly across. The wind (what little there is), is in the east, but it is not sufficient to keep the lugger ahead of Webb without rowing a little. Up to this time several small boats kept up with the swimmer. Captain Stewart sends a bottle of old brandy, brought up by Mr. Cullen March in his boat, who wished us good luck.

1.50 p.m.—Webb is doing 22 strokes a minute, chiefly a breast stroke, alternating occasionally on the side.

2 p.m.—Course is now straight out, abreast Haycliff. Sergeant-Major Hanbury in a boat with Mr. Forster keeping abreast the swimmer.

2.30 p.m.—Last boat gone, and taken telegrams. A little rain for a few minutes, which passed off. Calais Mail boat past on the east.

2.45 p.m.—Webb had the bottom of a flask twice full of ale, which he took easily while balancing himself with one hand. Flood Tide begins,—[*Illustrated London News* artist sketching the lad Baker.] Baker, the diver, takes the water, simply for diversion.

3.8 p.m.—Castle N.E. Lydden Spout Coast Guard Station N.W. ½ N. We sight a porpoise on the portside, and Mr. Payne presents a small revolver, but the judicious creature kept out of range.

3.15 p.m.—Castalia passed 2 miles to the East.

3.20 p.m.—We are now drifting towards the N.E.

3.25 p.m.—Webb is in good trim, doing 20 strokes a minute. Four miles out, water as smooth as glass.

3.30 p.m.—Webb is now making a beautiful methodic stroke. Before commencing each stroke he comes in a straight line almost on the top of the water, and then with the leverage of arms and legs propels himself.

3.40 p.m.—Webb took a little tin tot of ale. Nothing to eat yet.

4 p.m.—The flood tide has now brought us to abreast the Admiralty Pier; the dim outline of the Western Heights and the Castle is just visible through the haze.

4.20 p.m.—The bearings at present are Dover N.W. ¾ N 5 miles distant. Webb is doing over a mile and a half an hour.

4.30 p.m.—Another large porpoise sighted on the port side, swimming about near Webb. Sun came out, beautiful and warm. At this time Mr. Payne asked how Webb felt, and Webb replied "All right." Whereupon the party on the lugger gave three hearty cheers. Now been in the water 3½ hours.

5 p.m.—Castle bears N.W. by N. South Foreland N.W. Webb now takes his third allowance of beer, two tin tots. At the same time he had a little beef tea. His course is now E.S.E.. Ward, his cousin, on the boat, asked him how he was getting on, and he replied "Capital."

5.30 p m.—Told Webb from the lugger that we were more than one third of the way. Blue sky appears on the East, and light clouds all round to the West and South.

5.40 p.m.—Course S.S.E.

5.45 p.m.—Webb took a little beer and beef tea. No solids yet.

5.50.—Captain Webb at this time was making rapid progress, and it taxed the powers of the rowers to follow him. Coming up with him, he being near our port side, he in reply to our enquiry, said "I am all right," and then three cheers and one more for his pluck were heartily given. The captain's broad face beaming smilingly out of the water in response.

6 p.m.—Castle N.W. ¾ N. South Foreland Lighthouse N.N.W. Supposed to be a mile outside the South Sands Head Light Ship, The Ville de Malaga, a large steamer (screw), passed towards Dunkerque. We gave a cheer, to which the wretched foreigners made no reply.

7 p.m.—Webb took some beer. Sun went down in a sea of gold. South Foreland Light appeared, and bore N.N.W. by N.

7.25 p.m.—It is now growing dark, Webb has just been spoken to and he says he is all right, and we cheered him.

7.45 p.m.—Dark, and the referees commenced watching, Mr. Wilkinson taking the first watch. Webb asked how he was going and the reply was right for Cape Grisnez. Cape Grisnez light was on the starboard bow.

8 p.m.—Cape Grisnez light S S.W.

8.25 p.m.—According to the reckoning Webb is now ten miles direct from South Foreland Lights.

8.30 p.m.—Called to the boat for warm coffee, which was taken. Webb is now reported as fresh as ever, and enjoyed his coffee. South Foreland Lights getting downward to the West. No food yet.

8.50 p.m.—Webb sang out "There's a lot of seaweed here." Fireworks seen at Deal.

9.15 p.m.—Tide turns to the West, and Webb takes the starboard side of the lugger.

9.20 p.m.—Webb says "I have got stung on the shoulder."

9.25 p.m.—"Lugger ahoy! Let us have that bottle of brandy." Brandy was taken and he was asked if all was right, and he said "Yes." What is the time?" Reply 9.20. Asks, "Is that Calais Light?" Reply "Yes."

9.30 p.m.—Sting has gone off. Nothing to eat yet Steamer on our starboard. Show flareup.

10 p.m.—Rambler tug came up with a party of Dover people on board. Moon rises.

11 p.m.—Calais Light S.E. by E. Webb is laughing in the water and very cheery. Eight miles from Cape Grisnez nine from Calis, 12½ from South Foreland.

11.15 p.m.—We are five miles outside Cape Grisnez.

11.20 p m.—Despatch boat went across from the lugger and told Webb that if he could hold out four hours longer he might be on shore. Webb seemed encouraged, and said he believed he could do it. The wind has slightly increased.

11.30 p.m.—Swimmer has just had some hot coffee, and is going on a strong steady stroke.

11.50 p.m.—Mail steamer to Calais came by, having come out of her course to see us. We cheered, and the passengers on board the steamer cheered heartily. A coloured light from the row boat showed Webb vigorously swimming.

Midnight.—Calais E.S.E., Dover, N.W. by N.

12.50.—Will you have anything?" "A little beef tea and a drop of brandy. A voice came from the row boat, "All right and cheerful," and we give three cheers.

1 a.m.—Sky clear; moon and stars shining brightly.

1.25 a.m.—Calls for hot coffee for Webb. Reported to be swimming freely.

2 a.m.—Sings out "All right," and we cheer him. As a precaution, Baker has his life-belt on ready to dive.

2.35 a.m.—Called for Toms, the skipper, to go to the row boat.

2.40 a.m.—Webb is all right; we cheer him.

3 a.m.—Webb is reported to be getting weaker, and Payne does not think he will do it. Takes coffee. Baker is stripped in the boat with the life-line. Took some brandy. Said he was all right, and we cheer him.

3.15 a.m.—Progress improving. Baker is told he may dress, as Webb is all right.

4 a.m.—Dawn; we have just given Webb a hearty cheer. Progress slow; sea ruffled.

4.30 a.m.—No sign of land. Orders for coffee and hot bricks: looking ominous. Off Cape Grisnez when the day dawned, but owing to the haze land was not visable.

4.40 a.m.—Making coffee. All hands to the coffee-pot. Webb had his coffee, and cried "All right," and we cheered him.

5.5 a.m.—Land sighted amid applause.

5.10 a.m.—Sun rose charmingly on the water.

5.30 a.m.—Beef tea.

5.40 a.m.—Land looming high.

6 a.m.—Off Sandgatte.

6.45 a.m.—Tide carrying him towards Calais.

7.15 a.m.—French pilot cutter passed, heartily cheering the swimmer. Broken water. Webb toiling hard to make land.

7.30 a.m.—A stiff breeze blowing, and a strong tide carrying him towards Calais. Webb much distressed by the sea slopping in his face; very much fagged. Just had a little refreshment.

7.40 a.m.—Baker is undressed in the boat.

7.42 a.m.—Baker is in the water with Webb.

7.44 a.m.—Baker on board again. Jib and mizen sails set; the lugger has great difficulty in not running away from the swimmer.

7.50 a.m.—Half a mile from shore. Webb still struggling and getting nearer shore.

8 a.m.—Still fighting the waves, and we give him a hearty cheer.

8.5 a.m.—Row boat to call for soundings. We drop the lead and find no bottom, but report 10 fathoms to the swimmer.

8.10 a.m.—Breeze is stiffening, and Webb is being buffeted by large-crested waves. Sounding again, 8 fathoms reported.

8.20 a.m.—Webb is being carried towards Calais Harbour by the tide. Soundings 7½ fathoms.

8.30 a.m.—Webb took some brandy.

8.45 a.m.—Half a mile yet. We cheer the swimmer, whose face is haggard and pale, yet set with determination.

9 a.m.—Wore round Webb and gave him a cheer.

9.10 a.m.—Westerly wind freshens. Crowd on Calais Pier.

9.20 a.m.—Wind still rough and Webb at it.

9.30 a.m.—A crew belonging to one of the mail packets came out in a boat and cheered Webb; went round on his windward side to help him.

9.45 a.m.—Going round Webb again; he is in his last quarter of a mile. Plucky fellow he will do it. We cheer him. We are in 5 fathoms of water.

9.50 a.m.—Still struggling. The big packet boat on the windward side is doing good service.

10 a.m.—Within 150 yards of the Harbour; lugger on weather side. Baker in again.

10.10 a.m.—Sounded again, and found 3½ fathoms.

10.12 a.m.—Three fathoms.

10.14 a.m.—Two and a half fathoms.

10.15 a.m.—Two fathoms.

10.19 a.m.—One and a half fathoms (9 feet).

10.25 a.m.—Lugger wore round and came on the weather side.

10.35 a.m.—Webb in five feet of water.

10.41 a.m.—Webb on his feet, and was immediately surrounded by his friends.

10.43 a.m.—He got in a cab on the beach, and was driven to the Hotel de Paris, exhausted, but otherwise all right.

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